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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003926

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT TALABANI REPORTS ON POSSIBLE CHANGES TO
COR LEADERSHIP, TRIPS TO IRAN AND FRANCE

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Daniel Speckhard for reasons 1.4 (b) a
nd (d)

11. (S) SUMMARY: In a meeting on October 16, President Talabani informed the Ambassador that the Presidency Council (PC) - Talabani, Sunni Arab Vice President Tarik al-Hashimi, and Shia Vice President Adil Abd al-Mahdi - had met that day and agreed to bring their respective parties together to work toward improving Baghdad security, approval of a timetable for key political issues, national reconciliation, and bringing together moderates from all the parties. In addition, Talabani reported that the PC had agreed that the entire leadership of the Council of Representatives - starting with Speaker Mahmud al-Mashadani - had to be removed, preferably after Ramadan. When asked whether the Presidency Council (PC) had replacement candidates selected in advance, Talabani admitted that they hadn't, but insisted that even Mashadani's own party had abandoned him and agreed to the switch. Talabani also informed the Ambassador about his upcoming trips to Iran and France.
END SUMMARY.

Presidency Council in Agreement on Key Issues

12. (S) In a meeting on October 16, President Talabani informed the Ambassador that the Presidency Council (PC) - Talabani, Sunni Arab Vice President Tarik al-Hashimi, and Shia Vice President Adil Abd al-Mahdi - had met that day and agreed to bring their respective parties together to work toward improving Baghdad security, national reconciliation, and bringing together moderates from all the parties. (NOTE: In a subsequent meeting with Vice-President Cheney's National Security Advisor, Talabani reported that he had tasked al-Hashimi and Abd al-Mahdi to present two papers on their proposals on how to improve cross-sectarian cooperation and how to improve Baghdad's security. See septel. END NOTE). In addition, Talabani reported that the PC had agreed that the entire leadership of the Council of Representatives - starting with Speaker Mahmud al-Mashadani - had to be removed, preferably after Ramadan. When asked whether the PC had replacement candidates selected in advance, Talabani admitted that they had not, but insisted that even Mashadani's own party had abandoned him and agreed to the switch.

Press Statement Released on Timeline for 8 Key Issues

13. (C) In response to the Ambassador's query, Talabani stated that he had released a press statement (see below) on the status of the Timeline, but it had been published without firm dates pending the approval of all the political blocs in the Iraqi Government. According to Talabani, Maliki told him that he had also extracted a promise from Sadrist leader Moqtada al-Sadr to disarm his militia, the Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), and Maliki intended to travel to Najaf on October 18 to make a public announcement. Begin text of Timeline Press Release:

The Presidency Council Discusses the Security Situation
Within the Framework of the Political Timetable

October 16, 2006

The Presidency Council held a meeting in the residence of the President of the Republic Jalal al-Talabani on October 16, 2006. The council members discussed the security situations, the latest political developments, and the procedures taken to complete the implementation of Baghdad Security Plan and assessing its previous stages. The Presidency Council also reviewed the reconciliation steps and the necessity of supporting the efforts exerted to achieve the national unity and harmony among the components of the Iraqi people.

The council members also discussed all proposals and ideas of containing the sectarian and political tensions in the country, indicating the importance of the understandings reached within the framework of the Political Council of the National Security.

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It is worth noting that the Political Council has approved a political timetable of which some items were endorsed. The following are its most important items:

- To agree to a political timetable (Finished)
- To form the committee of amending the constitution (Finished)
- To approve the Law of the Executive Procedures of Forming the Regions (Finished)
- To approve the Investment Law (Finished)
- To approve the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq
- To approve the Governorates Elections Law and specifying its date
- To approve the Petroleum Law
- To approve the De-Bathification Law
- To approve the Law of the Powers of the Governorates' Councils
- To approve the Law of the Flag, Emblem, and the National Anthem
- To approve the CPA Order No 91 regarding the armed forces and the militias in Iraq
- Discussing the general amnesty, militias, and other armed formations

2007

- The committee of amending the Constitution shall end its works

February

- Forming the independent commissions in accordance with

the Constitution

March

-- A referendum on the constitutional amendments (if it is necessary). End Text.

Visits to Tehran, Paris

¶4. (S) Talabani informed the Ambassador that he had accepted an invitation to visit Tehran at the end of October for a short visit, just after a visit to Paris to meet with President Chirac. According to Talabani, the French Ambassador to Baghdad extended the invitation, stating that "France has something to offer Iraq."
SPECKHARD